

Washington, D.C. — Today, Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) released the following statement about his vote for a fiscally accountable and responsible budget which also refocuses on the right investment priorities for America's families.

"This budget restores fiscal responsibility and accountability, strengthens our national defense, while investing in the next generation's health and education as well as America's prosperity," stated Joe. "I made a promise to make the long-term accountability and prosperity of our economy, including a return to fiscal balance, a top priority, while changing our investment priorities to health and education security."

"That's why I voted to return to the 'pay-as-you-go' government, started under President Clinton, which left us with an over \$5 trillion projected surplus but which turned into a nearly \$9 trillion debt under President Bush. Just as an average family from my district has to balance their checkbooks, Congress has a fiscal and moral obligation to practice its own budget discipline and reverse the record budget deficits that have placed trillions in debt on future generations."

"This Conference Agreement returns the budget to balance – reaching a surplus of \$41 billion in 2012 – without raising taxes by adhering to the principal that all new mandatory spending must be paid for."

"It does not raise taxes," stated Congressman Sestak. "In contrast, it actually supports tax relief that would benefit our families by extending the child tax credit, 10 percent bracket, and marriage penalty relief. It also provides for immediate Alternative Minimum Tax relief, preventing more than 20 million middle-class taxpayers from being hit by the tax. In 2004, 114,000 Pennsylvania families were subject to the AMT – and if nothing is done to fix the system, an estimated 837,000 families will be subject to the AMT in 2007."

"In order to institute fiscal discipline, this budget also includes provisions to invest in efforts to identify and eliminate wasteful spending and improve government efficiency," pointed out Joe. "For example, it contains program integrity initiatives to root out waste, fraud and abuse in government programs or in compliance with tax laws."

“Equally important, this budget also puts children and families first by changing our investment priorities to health and education,” said Joe. “For example, in Pennsylvania, 281,080 children do not have health insurance. This budget helps these children by creating a reserve fund of up to \$50 billion for the State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) – reducing the number of uninsured children across the county. This budget also provides substantially more funding for Pennsylvania’s 1,785,000 children enrolled in public elementary, middle and high schools – providing nearly \$8 billion more for education and training than the President’s budget.”

“In addition, this budget refocuses our priority on education, providing an increase of \$9.5 billion above the Presidents request,” pointed out Joe. “And it recognizes that the 983,800 small businesses in Pennsylvania are the engine of the economy. To spur economic growth and support small businesses, the budget rejects the President’s proposal to cut the Small Business Administration by 26 percent from last year’s request,” said Joe.

“Finally, this budget strengthens our national defense and honors our promises to our brave troops and veterans by providing the largest increase for veterans’ health care in the history of our country – \$3.6 billion more than the President’s budget and more than \$30 billion above the President over five years. This will help to ensure that the 1,145,918 veterans in Pennsylvania receive care worthy of their sacrifice.”

“After years of rising deficits and national debt, this budget finally puts us on the right course,” added Joe. “By instituting pay-as-you-go budgeting, launching initiatives to root out wasteful spending, and making key investments in America’s top priorities of health and education, with a strong defense, this budget is a major step in the right direction for all of America’s families.”

In Congress, Congressman Sestak has made education, healthcare, economic development, and national security his main priorities, and he selected his committee assignments to reflect those priorities. Since he has been in Congress, he has held numerous summits on these priorities as a way to pool together local, state and national experts to discuss the salient issues and, more importantly, to develop legislative solutions. In particular, he held a three-part series of Education Summits, with Education and Labor Committee Chairman George Miller, Higher Education Chairman Ruben Hinojosa, and Elementary and Secondary Education Chairman Dale Kildee. The Congressman also recently held a summit with Congressman Patrick Kennedy on mental health parity and he is bringing together interested parties, such as medical professionals, administrators, nurses, businesses, and industry for a healthcare summit next month. And he held two summits on Economic Development, with local chambers of commerce, business owners, economic development professionals, elected officials, union leaders, and members of the higher education and advanced training communities to discuss and work on

strategies enhancing our local and regional economy. These summits generated much discussion, and he has been using his committee assignments to push through ideas that came out of our debate.

Congressman Sestak successfully offered two amendments to the Wounded Warrior Assistance Act, which will improve mental health care for our wounded soldiers. He passed an amendment during the Head Start Reauthorization bill to provide loan forgiveness (up to \$17,500) for Head Start teachers, the same currently offered to math, science, and special education teachers. Through his work on the Small Business Committee, he was able to introduce and pass an amendment addressing the problem of contracting bundling, in which federal agencies consolidate purchases into mega-contracts, to ensure small businesses have greater access to federal government contracting opportunities. And he was able to pass an amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill that will ensure the Department of Defense is not duplicating efforts and wasting funding by requiring appropriate market research is conducted prior to awarding contracts over \$1 million. He is also putting forward an entrepreneurial bill to help spur investment in our region.

The budget conference agreement passed the House by a vote of 214 to 209 this afternoon.

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "DeepBlue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. House of Representatives.

###